

OPEN DOCUMENT FORMAT

ODF ALLIANCE

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Alliance Calls on Microsoft to Act on Its Commitment to Implement Support for ODF

Washington, DC, May 21, 2008. The ODF Alliance today greeted with scepticism Microsoft's announcement of its intention to include support for the OpenDocument Format in the first half of 2009. "The proof will be whether and when Microsoft's promised support for ODF is on par with its support for its own format. Governments will be looking for actual results, not promises in press releases," said Marino Marcich, managing director of the ODF Alliance.

"Clearly this announcement reflects the strong demand from customers worldwide, especially governments, for access to ODF, a truly universal, open standards-based file format," Marcich continued. "Microsoft continues to answer with a steady stream of promises. However, until Microsoft enables Office users to create and save in ODF by default as easily and fully as in Microsoft's own formats, governments will continue to adopt a 'buyer beware' attitude. Because Microsoft has a history of broken promises, no one should celebrate this news until we see what is actually done and how quickly it is put in place."

Twelve national, seven regional, and several local governments have now adopted pro-ODF policies, in addition to more than 50 government agencies.¹ The Netherlands and South Africa officially adopted policies requiring ODF's use by government agencies, joining ten other countries that had already done so. Following the trend at the national level, six regional governments have adopted policies requiring the use of ODF.

Marcich advised caution for now, noting that Microsoft announced its intention two years ago to implement "support" for ODF for via a third-party translator that is still in beta (under development) and will not be completed until the first half of 2009. There was limited functionality available via the converters and they were poorly integrated into the overall Microsoft user interface, as compared with the integration and functionality Microsoft offers for its own OOXML format.

"What governments want is direct, internal support for ODF in Microsoft Office. Governments do not want to waste time waiting for translators to load or re-engineering default-save functions for their workforce," added Marcich. "If Microsoft actually follows through with this most recent promise, it will reinforce the global market-led demand by customers, particularly

¹ <http://www.odfalliance.org/resources/Adoptions20Dec2007.pdf>

governments, seeking open standards based interoperability through ODF."

Despite these concerns, Marcich cited the progress reflected in today's announcement. "The era of public information being locked in a closed format requiring the public to purchase a particular brand of software in order to secure access is rapidly coming to a close, thanks in no small measure to the courage and foresight of leading ODF-supporting governments that have been willing to take a stand on this important public-policy issue," concluded Marcich. "Today's announcement validates the ODF Alliance's mission and indicates the growing demand and support for ODF among governments. If it acts on its promise, Microsoft will join a list of some two dozen vendors that have implemented support for ODF in their products."

About the ODF Alliance:

The OpenDocument Format Alliance is an organization of governments, academic institutions, non-government organizations and industry dedicated to educating policy makers, IT administrators and the public on the benefits and opportunities of ODF.